

MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

NUMBER 67

TOLEDO, OHIO

DECEMBER, 1933



ADORATION OF THE CHILD

GIFT OF EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

FILIPPINO LIPPI



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Art is that science whose laws applied to all things made by man make them most pleasing to the senses.

George W. Stevens.

EDITORIAL

THE attendance at the Toledo Museum of Art will surpass 300,000 this year by a goodly margin.

For many years ours has had the largest attendance in proportion to population of all art museums in the country.

The extent of the interest in art has been forcefully shown in Chicago this year. While twenty-two million visits were made to the Century of Progress Exposition, 1,600,000 were made to the exhibition of paintings, and 270,000 to the exhibition of prints in the Chicago Art Institute. And this despite the fact that the paintings and prints were located a mile or so from the exposition grounds and an admission fee was charged.

All of these visitors to the Chicago Art Institute saw four of the Toledo Museum's important paintings, lent to Chicago for the occasion, and pronounced outstanding among the many great masterpieces there assembled.

These, then, are our current answers to the questions often asked: "Are people interested in art?" and "Is the Museum appreciated in Toledo?"

World's Fair visitors were more interested in art than in Ripley's side show; and Toledo people have rolled up an attendance at the Museum greater than the population of the city.

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OUR PAINTING BY FILIPPINO LIPPI

THE position of Filippino Lippi, like that of El Greco, Velasquez, and numerous other artists, has suffered many vicissitudes in the four hundred and more years since he departed this life.

Giorgio Vasari, biographer of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects of the Italian Renaissance, and himself an artist of ability, speaks of Filippino Lippi as "a painter of very fine genius and admirable powers of invention." This judgment, expressed within fifty years of Filippino's death, was modified by the critics of later years along with Vasari's praise of Raphael and many another of the artists of his time.

Modern scholarship in its early stages, having found inaccuracies of fact and imaginative anecdote in Vasari's writings, had a tendency to spend much effort in discrediting the almost contemporary historian of Italian artists. Even so, his work is the basis for all more recent research and while at times inaccurate, romantic and given to overfulsome praise in the light of modern opinion, there is in it many a germ of fact and much sound aesthetic judgment.

Modern criticism has dealt harshly with Filippino, robbing him of many of the works which contributed to his glory in past ages and bestowing them lavishly upon others of his contemporaries. His father, Filippo Lippi, and his master, Botticelli, have profited from this despoiling of the younger man. Even so, enough of his work remains assured to him from documentary evidence to maintain his high place in the history of the Italian Renaissance and the art of the world.

Crowe and Cavalcaselle spoke most highly of Filippino in their monumental history of Italian painting. Hutton, in editing their work some years later, was inclined in his footnotes to give a less important place to him. Of Filippino Lippi, however, a more recent critic, Mr. P. J. Konody¹ says, "Filippino's faults are the faults of his time. Perhaps it would be more correct to call them the virtues of his time, for they embody the essence of the spirit of the Renaissance. His fine qualities placed him far beyond his compeers. He came closer to what we call the modern spirit than any other painter of the fifteenth century. Naturally his works are unequal. In each fresh picture he aimed at a new effect, instead of contenting himself with the repetition of a former success. In this respect his practice differed from many of the great masters of his age. His career was one of continual progress, for what we would now consider the work of his decline, was, in the eyes of his contemporaries, his most admirable achievement."

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VIRGIN AND ANGEL, DETAIL FROM ADORATION OF THE CHILD BY FILIPPINO LIPPI

Another estimate of his worth is given by André Pératé,² who says: "Superior to Botticelli as a landscapist he is evidently far from possessing the same creative gifts, nor that rhythm of line which will remain unique in Italian painting; the proportions of his figures are not always beautiful nor happy, and his search for passionate expression and movement leads him more than once into affectation and forced gesticulations."

Another well-considered statement is that of Van Marle,³ "Filippino Lippi was a Florentine painter who at the outset of his career was an adherent of the great traditions of the Quattrocento and a pupil of Botticelli, but who finished by acquiring a mannerism of a baroque character which led directly towards all that which in sixteenth century painting is inferior to that of the previous century."

Filippo Lippi, a Florentine artist of great renown, had settled at Prato where he was commissioned to paint the frescoes in the cathedral. There in 1457 his son Filippino was born. In 1469 the father died at Spoleto, Filippino then being eleven or twelve years old. By the elder Lippi's will, Fra Diamante, a painter of no particular ability, was made the boy's guardian and perhaps Filippino's

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artistic education, which had begun under his father, was continued for a time under his guardian, but the formation of his talents was soon entrusted to Botticelli. That there is controversy as to whether some pictures are the work of Filippino or of Botticelli is proof of his adeptness.

His abilities were early evident and he was given important commissions while still in his teens. When but twenty-three he produced a masterpiece in the Apparition of the Virgin to S. Bernard, now in the Badia in Florence. At the age of twenty-seven, he was entrusted with the completion of the frescoes in the Brancacci chapel in the church of the Carmine at Florence. These had been begun by Masolino and continued by Masaccio and were recognized by the Florentines as among their most important treasures. With the modesty which distinguishes a great master, and to produce a decorative unity, he adapted his style closely to that of his predecessor of half a century earlier.

The examples which he had before him in the work of Masaccio, one of the greatest masters of painting, could not have failed to have, and did have, their influence upon his style in his less important works, as well as in his monumental frescoes in the Brancacci chapel.

Thenceforth, he never lacked for commissions in Florence, in Rome and elsewhere. In 1486, he painted the Virgin and SS. Victor, John the Baptist, Bernard and Zenobius, now in the Uffizi. The tondo in the Corsini Gallery in Florence dates from the same period.

In 1488, upon recommendation of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Cardinal Oliviero Caraffa commissioned him to decorate his chapel in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome. The Cardinal later wrote that "he would not have changed him for all the painters that Greece had ever contained."

The Adoration of the Magi, from S. Donato, and now in the Uffizi, is dated 1496. In 1502 he completed his work in the Strozzi chapel, and in 1503 he sent two panels to the King of Hungary in lieu of accepting his invitation to go to that country.

His testament is evidence that, by diligence and thrift, he accumulated considerable property. In 1505 he died, and Vasari relates that "while the funeral procession was passing, all the shops in Via de' Servi were closed, as is done for the most part at the funeral of princes only."

Filippino Lippi lived at a most interesting time. He was born while the great Cosimo de' Medici was still living and not long before his death the Medici were expelled from Florence and Savonarola had triumphed. He stood with Filippo and Botticelli as harbingers

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ANGEL, DETAIL FROM ADORATION OF THE CHILD BY FILIPPINO LIPPI

of the new age, the High Renaissance, that was to bring forth Michelangelo, Titian, Raphael. In his works the new note is sounded, the spirit of the sixteenth century anticipated.

The Adoration of the Child now in the Toledo Museum of Art as the gift of its Founder, Edward Drummond Libbey, is one of the fine paintings from the hand of Filippino Lippi. Few pictures are so well rounded in importance; seldom does one single work represent the artist at his highest ability, present his innovations clearly, portray his epoch so truthfully. Endearing in its subject, it sum-

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VIRGIN, DETAIL FROM ADORATION OF THE CHILD BY FILIPPINO LIPPI

marizes Florentine painting at the close of the fifteenth century. Filippino was student, friend, co-worker with the brilliant band of genius that swept the stern Middle Ages into the culture and gaiety of the High Renaissance. From Venice had come to Florence about 1438 Domenico Veneziano and he had brought with him a new technique, the use of oil colors. By Filippino's time this method had been mastered by the Italian artists and was rapidly growing in popularity to the ultimate displacement of the old fresco style.

The Toledo Museum's picture is in oil upon a wooden panel. The Virgin is represented kneeling, monumental in contrast to the angel

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who supports the infant Christ. In the fourteen hundreds the artists of Italy had attained mastery in the representation of human anatomy, hence no longer is the Child a diminutive old man, nor a wooden image, but rather a normal chubby infant. The figures are placed in a garden, rich in its designed foliage and flowers. Back of them the architecture of the Renaissance is represented by marble steps, the arch and the piers of a portico and an open doorway showing two flights of steps in gray tones remarkable as a study in values. Through the portico may be seen a delightful and delicately painted landscape with a castle, trees, flowing water and the distant blue hills. The color harmony is most admirable, the rich blue of the Madonna's mantle heightened with its border of gold, the bright red of her dress and the deep rose and green of the angel's costume forming a delightful play of graduated color, all against the luminous gray of the architecture and the pale tints of the landscape background.

The painting was acquired in Italy by Charles Timbal of Paris about 1851. From his collection it passed to that of Gustave Dreyfus⁴ where it remained until the sale of that collection in 1930. It has now found its permanent home in the Toledo Museum of Art.

Although the painting has been considered the work of Filippino Lippi for nearly a century, a recent critic suggests the possibility that it might be by Bastiano Mainardi.⁵ Careful comparison with the known works of the later artist readily disproves this theory. The faces of his Virgins are of a more individualized type, of less perfect features, at times of a childish prettiness. The eyes are usually not only downcast, but almost closed. The hands are more awkwardly done, lacking the grace and beauty of proportion found in Filippino's earlier works and in our picture. His landscapes are frequently more insistent, his architectural motifs more formal.

It has been suggested by Van Marle that Mainardi came into contact with Filippino in the early years of the sixteenth century. His handling in many of his works of the Christ Child would indicate later development of the forms found in the treatment of the same subject in our Filippino Lippi.

Comparison with the works of Filippino of established date would indicate that the Adoration of the Child now in the Toledo Museum was painted about 1485. Quite similar in concept and quality to it is the Adoration of the Child in the Uffizi. There are marked analogies in both mass and detail of the figures of the Virgin in each picture but the most patent indication of the same hand at a not too great lapse of time is found in the handling of the diaphanous headdress. The more Botticellesque character of the figures and the

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evident derivation of the landscape from Filippo Lippi in the Adoration in the Uffizi would indicate for it a date some years earlier than that of our picture. It is said by Van Marle to antedate the Apparition of the Virgin to S. Bernard in the Badia. This picture belongs to the year 1480 and in it the quality of the distant landscape painting is quite similar to that of the background of our own.

It is in the Madonna and Saints of 1486 now in the Uffizi that Filippino's mannerisms, which were to mark his later work, make their first prominent appearance. None of these noted by Van Marle as overcrowded composition, imperfect proportions and uncertain line, excessive nervous and unexplained movement, are in our picture unduly apparent. Perhaps the last is tentatively indicated in the attitude of the angel and especially in the position of the left hand. The motion even here, however, is less pronounced than in the Apparition in the Badia.

The tondo of the Corsini Gallery, Florence, is dated by Van Marle in the year 1486. It has numerous analogies to our own picture, which would further substantiate our dating of it. The architecture is somewhat more elaborate than in our own painting. The landscape, seen as in ours through an arch, is quite similar in quality. The angel's wings are somewhat more transparent. The foliage of the foreground has been replaced by a patterned floor, and even in the Madonna and Child there is indicated more of movement, while the attitudes of the angels begin to approach agitation.

It would seem reasonable, therefore, to date our picture in the same year, or perhaps better yet, in the preceding one, 1485.

Such a picture as the one now in the Toledo Museum as the gift of our Founder must restore to Filippino through its beauty of composition, of coloring, of line and proportion, much of the reputation which was his in his own time. Here is the Italian Renaissance in all its glory; art, religious yet human, dignified yet simple; the Adoration, not in the manger or the stable or an unfamiliar landscape, but brought to the immediate countryside and the well known atmosphere of Italy of that day.

¹ Konody, Filippino Lippi, London, 1905, p. xvii.

² Michel, *Histoire de l'Art*, III, ii, p. 693.

³ Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, XII, p. 291.

⁴ *Les Arts*, January 1908, p. 4. Illustration.

Pantheon, January 1931, p. 18.

Pantheon, March 1931, p. 120. Illustration.

⁵ Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, XIII, p. 225, note.

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PAVIA

D. S. MAC LAUGHLAN

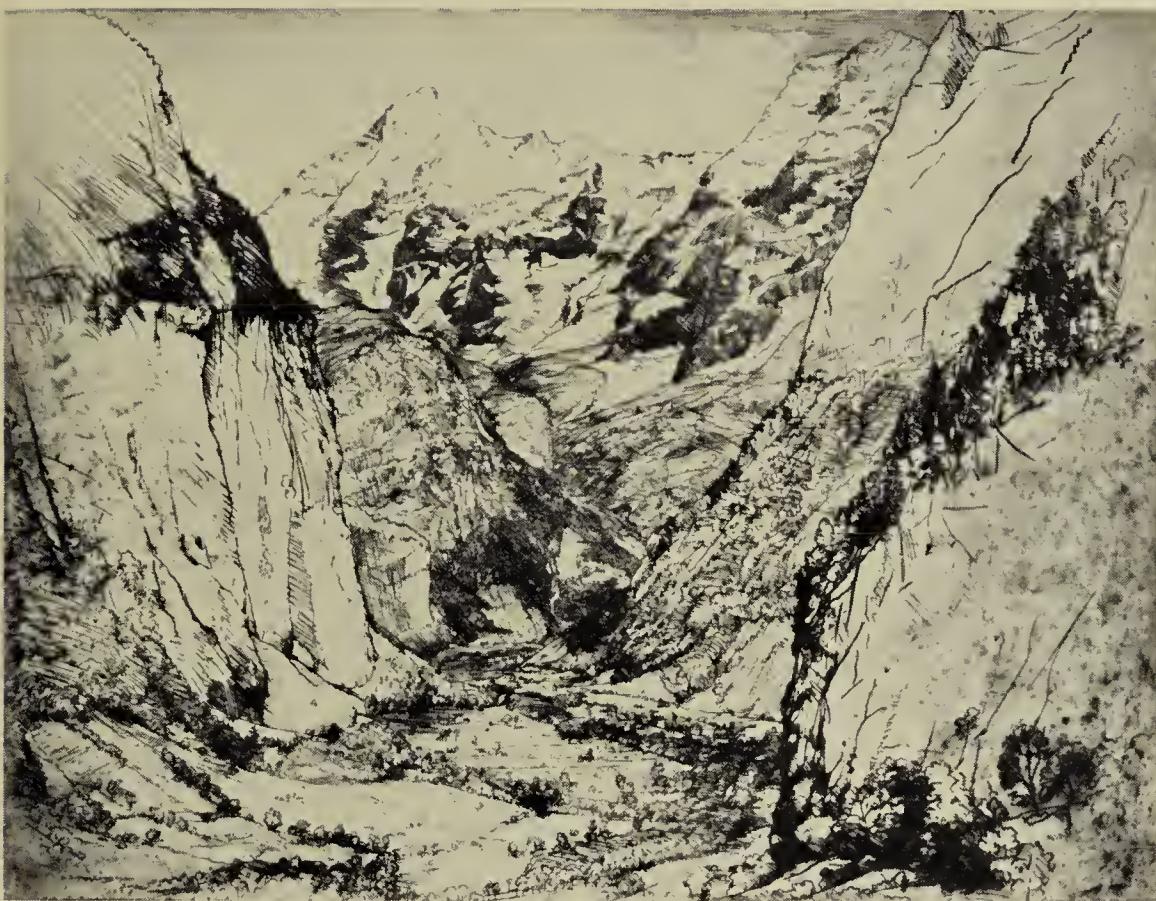
GIFT OF MISS ALICE ROULLIER, CHICAGO

A NOTABLE GIFT OF FINE PRINTS

AN IMPORTANT gift of one hundred thirty-eight etchings by Donald Shaw MacLaughlan has recently come to the Museum from Miss Alice Roullier of Chicago. Miss Roullier's long connoisseurship in the field of prints and her acquaintance with the artist, make this group an authoritative selection and one which will always stand as an anthology of his work. A comprehensive collection of the work of an outstanding American etcher, it brings distinction to the Museum's print galleries, in which contemporary work has been as yet inadequately represented.

Covering a period of about thirty years, the etchings give a perfect picture of the development of the art of MacLaughlan. His total works number more than three hundred subjects in etching, and those represented in the Roullier gift are a splendid selection to illustrate his accomplishments in this field. The variety of subject and of technique makes it difficult to believe that all are the work of one man. His interest has turned at different times to architecture,

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THE LAUTERBRUNNEN

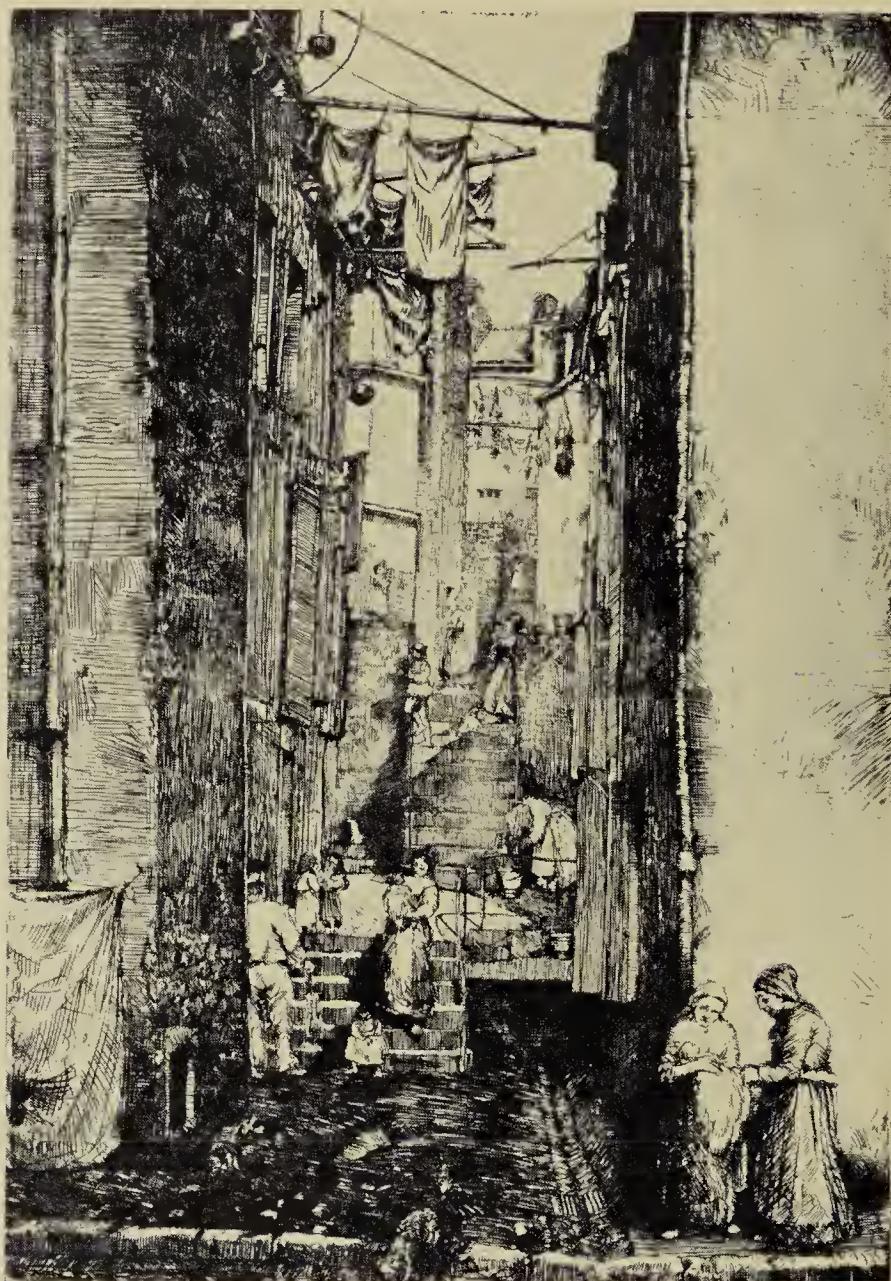
D. S. MACLAUGHLAN

simple English and French landscapes, Swiss mountain scenery, the rural South of our own country, animal and figure subjects and perhaps above all, the beauties of Italy from the hill towns to the glories of Venice.

Donald Shaw MacLaughlan was born in Canada in 1876, but at an early age moved with his family to Boston, Massachusetts, where he received his first art training. At the age of twenty-two he went to Paris and spent three months in the studio of Gérôme. He next went to Italy for a short stay, returning to Paris, and there he first began to etch. In 1901 he exhibited two etchings at the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. At this time he painted as well as etched and even exhibited paintings in the Salons of 1902 and 1903, but from 1904 to 1911 he appears solely as an etcher.

MacLaughlan studied the prints of Rembrandt, of Meryon and of Whistler, and these masters are the predominating influences in the formation of his style. From the beginning, however, he absorbed the best of what he learned, created his personal style which continued to develop, becoming more and more individual. He traveled extensively, throughout England, France, Italy and Switzerland,

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RUELLE DU PECHEUR

D. S. MAC LAUGHLAN

returning occasionally to this country. Wherever he visited he made pictorial records of the land on copper, and the immensity of the field covered by his activities is an impressive achievement. For fifteen years he devoted himself entirely to etching. More recently he has spent some time painting in oil and watercolor, but it is as an etcher that he is recognized as an artist of the first rank.

The earliest of the etchings date from 1899, four of that year being included in the gift to the Museum. As a subject architecture attracted him first, especially the old buildings of Paris, which a half century earlier had so enthralled Charles Meryon. These first prints are meticulously drawn, full of detail, cleanly printed.

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SUSSEX HEDGES

D. S. MAC LAUGHLAN

One of the interesting plates of 1902 is the *Ruelle du Pêcheur*, depicting a settlement of primitive fisher-folk, probably of Brittany. In this picturesque scene are such characteristic elements as lines of hanging washing, groups of gossiping women, and dwellings with crooked stairways.

In Rouen, where MacLaughlan spent some time, he, like other artists, found innumerable subjects for composition in the churches and narrow streets. Besides these more conventional scenes, he there etched *The Builders*, a beautifully executed study of a primitive type of cart loaded with wood, drawn by two horses. In many of MacLaughlan's etchings interest is added by the inclusion of a bit of animal life, to which he also brought sound draftsmanship and knowledge of form.

Some of MacLaughlan's loveliest prints are those made in Italy where he spent many years, first going there to live in 1904. Distinctive views of many famous Italian cities appear among his works,—Pavia, Tivoli, Perugia, Siena and Bologna being but a few of them. The etching, *Pavia*, it is a splendid example of his skillful drawing of architecture, the dominating buildings forming a back-

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TOWERS AND GARDENS

D. S. MAC LAUGHLAN

ground for a market scene of great activity. The etching called Tivoli is especially lovely with its view of the village high among the wooded hills. The combination of landscape with architecture heralds the artist's later interest in landscape itself.

The Italian etchings of 1904 and 1905 are but a small number of the many scenes of Italy which MacLaughlan produced. For several years previous to 1914 he lived at Asolo near Venice, where some of his finest works were done. In 1922 he returned to Venice, to draw such magnificent scenes of the canals, palaces and bridges of that city as The Rialto, Towers and Gardens, and The Storm Canal.

France, England and Switzerland engaged the attention of MacLaughlan for several years at various times. Sussex Hedges of 1920 is one of the typical English landscapes, with the great trees against

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a summer sky, the entire countryside bathed with light and warmth. Of similar quality is Gwinnear Fields, while Devonshire Village represents another type of English scene.

Still another English setting which appealed to MacLaughlan, as it did to Whistler, was the Thames and its environs. Life of the Thames is the title of a typical print showing many boats, on which men are working or resting, and in the distance the building of the Customs House. It is interesting to note the similarity in choice of subject between Whistler and MacLaughlan. Both drew the Venetian scene and the Thames, but in choice of locale the resemblance ends. Some Whistler influence may be admitted in MacLaughlan's work, but the latter's treatment of almost identical spots is far different from that of the earlier American master. Whistler's was an art of suggestion, of capturing the atmosphere of a place; MacLaughlan brings a fresh viewpoint to familiar scenes; his work is more closely defined, more virile perhaps. In the Thames group he delights in portraying the bustling activity and the more commercial aspects of the river. Wind and Rain, and The Rushing Tide, both done in 1913, are strong compositions with dramatic use of rich black.

From Switzerland come two of MacLaughlan's most ambitious and daring subjects; the splendid Lauterbrunnen, which expresses by the use of line alone the immensity of space and great heights, the cold crisp atmosphere and brilliant light of a mountain view. This plate has been acclaimed by critics as a remarkable feat in the overcoming of technical problems in depicting so commanding a motive. The Grimsel, showing the mountain in a terrifying mood, dark and forbidding, is perhaps more dramatic, more powerful in its use of strong contrast, but in actual craftsmanship it does not have the quality of the Lauterbrunnen, which depends only on the lightly bitten line for the expression of its grandeur.

In the recent etchings by MacLaughlan we find that he has broken away entirely from the more conventional technique of his earlier works. Interest in detail and mass is definitely secondary to interest in rhythmic pattern, and the principles of impressionism with their emphasis on light are preeminent. He attempts and succeeds in expressing more than the outward appearance of a place, and gives its very spirit. Every possibility of the medium is used to its fullest measure, but never beyond.

Exterior of Chartres is one of MacLaughlan's recent architectural subjects, broad in conception and execution. The composition is unusual in that he has eliminated most of the detail of the building, concentrating interest on the doorways, especially on the one through which a procession is passing.

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The Rialto, a study of that famous thoroughfare, which shows MacLaughlan's use of contrast of brilliant light with cool shadow, is one of the etchings done in 1926. The viewpoint is from below, looking up into the half-shadowed curve of the arched bridge. One of the finest of the recent Venetian prints is Towers and Gardens, showing the rich architecture of that city, the sunlit canal, and decoratively drawn foliage.

In the drawing of trees and foliage, MacLaughlan was particularly adept. Trees were for him a constant source of study and they appear in his prints in every conceivable aspect. In such plates as Trees and Fields, with its tall, stately trees at the left framing the rolling fields, The Tempest, its trees wind-tossed, and in Tennessee Pike, a peaceful southern landscape, contrasting treatment is fitted to the varied moods of the scenes. Sometimes the leaves are drawn to form a definite pattern, at times only the outline of the shapes of the trees are suggested.

Included in the collection are items of some personal interest: MacLaughlan's etched self-portrait at the age of twenty-six; a print of a pet spaniel, Jack; and—important to a representative collection—several unique trial impressions, some with pencil modifications. Many of MacLaughlan's prints are already exceedingly rare, as he makes only a limited number of impressions, each an example of his personal method of inking and printing.

He is one of the most thorough of etchers in that he not only prints his own plates, feeling that each requires individual attention, but grinds and prepares the ink himself, and searches far and wide for the most suitable paper for his purpose. His work contains little or no drypoint, though he etches directly on the grounded plate without preliminary drawings. His technical skill in etching is, of course, unquestioned, as is his artistic ability, and the quality of his printing has been so highly admired that the French Government entrusted to him the reprinting of a number of Rembrandt's plates.

To the prints Miss Roullier adds the definitive catalog¹ of his life work and so completes her gift to the collections with full working information for the reference library.

This magnificent collection of etchings has been hung in Gallery 7, where it will be exhibited until it takes its place in the Museum's print collection. There is much in the exhibition of interest to the casual visitor as well as to the student and earnest print-lover.

¹ A Descriptive Catalog of the Etched Work of Donald Shaw MacLaughlan, With Introduction by Marie Bruette. Roullier Art Galleries, Chicago, 1924.